



**Project
Space**



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Kaya Joan

Fugitive Wanderer

June 25th - July 21st, 2021

limbo pathways w/ Kaya Joan's *Fugitive Wanderer*:
mapping blood memory btw manifested multidimensions

The multidisciplinary Afro-Indigenous artist, Kaya Joan, unfolds memory. As a community artist and facilitator of six years in T'kranto, Dish with One Spoon treaty territory, their works unearth stories, conjures the past and leaves futuristic trails as medicine. In *Fugitive Wanderer*, their spirituous storytelling manifests a blend between portraits and portals. To discern both spiritual summoning and those who will arrive on Earth later, Joan gathers repurposed material, wood, graffiti, poetry, and dreams to mark a place in between skies, alleyways, and diasporic, moving blood. Their body of work is a living, breathing map that lightly etches the subconscious and collective memory as decolonizing aesthetics; an anchor in liminal space.

Fugitive Wanderer apparatuses us to the ancestors and other unseen beings. Between blood and dub inspired dreams as a diasporic, Indigenous person, Joan gathers,

traces and conjures guides from specific motifs, such as snakes and stars. Their pieces bridge multiple truths; of their Jamaican, Vincentian, Kanien:keha'ka (Kahnawake) city dwelling identity. All of the multiplicities of their identity are efforts to engrave totality and liberation onto urban landscapes, expressing “*ne ne akwé:kon iakwatatenónhkwe*” / “all my relations”. They document the entities who pave a way toward a future. Ahead of their materialized dreams lies *A Duppy Awoke*, a green spirit that had just arrived to the waking world holds an approaching partial eclipse at their neck in complementary harmony with a hot pink six pointed star. Tangled in webs and bursts of celestial rays, there is pencil lead in the distance, curling underneath repurposed poster mantras that are both torn and intact around the figure. “*Tektehratirónta*” / “I pull up the roots” in moth-wing green is signed above a burst of light on the wooden slate, illuminating the meeting of these multiplicities throughout.

Trinidadian-Canadian artist Curtis Talwst Santiago presents a question Joan proves to answer through their alterity, the gathering of their ancestors and dimensions and the thesis of *Fugitive Wanderer*: “if there is ancestral trauma, why not ancestral imagination and joy?” Joan actively pulls instances of mourning, resilience and emergent joy in a symbolic feat between dreaming and the living to counteract the one-dimensional storytelling of diasporic Black and Indigenous pain. In *Grandmothers*, Joan visits ancestral closeness, remembrance, and channelled intergenerational healing. In liminal fashion, the painting is split in shared similarities and differences to invoke a moment between ancestor and youth. The right side of the painting suggests the entrance of the past and an ancestor, lined in mauves, purples and deeper forest greens with shades that have aged, experienced, and witnessed tests of time and spatial resistance in comparison to the left one’s lighter linework. There are also wisps of teal and lilac that don’t make their way to the other side but the two sides share a space and differing similarities of transparent or full bloom flora and fauna resting on their shoulders and skin. The background is in separate (but meeting) whirlpools and distinct descending corners of mystifying blues contrasted against warm, celestial yolk-like

spheres that quietly seep into the sea/sky. In the center, a strikingly earth-toned ancestor and future kin face each other sitting in fetal positions with a pink outline, resonating *Duppy Awoke's* star while being orbited by the rhythm of Joan's heavenly reimagined cyclic emblem. They carry imprints of tree branches, swirls of flower petals and snapshots of stardust sharing complementary tones with one another, hinting at a distant, familiar actualized dream or *duppy*.

Excavation is crucial in Joan's process in weaving a trail for future kin. *Whispers between kin* reveal motifs on revival, protection, and noting the "other" - be it either world or person. Split between light and shadow, this gateway contains differentiating textures, overlapping waves, distant birds and deepened silhouettes that evoke both skyscrapers and figures, accompanied by the outline of a protective serpent in soft green crayon. As they stamp "I DREAM OF OTHER WORLDS" on the upper right corner of sky, the eye catches a curl of yellow in its lower left murky ends. Joan's intentions are cohesively emergent throughout. *Unbury* is another painting that embarks on exploring differences in its merged styles. It features thin linework depicting starlight to represent the beyond while there are elements that aim to ground, place and familiarize oneself with the earth. There are peeking dandelions and weeds on opposing edges, electric poles and a figure below the elongated graffiti. The purpose of their stark outlines is to demonstrate presence against the odds of being erased and obscured.

Immersing us in multiple places, Joan unlocks and engages with materials aimed to function spiritually and medicinally. As a means to placemake, *Portal Keys* are six spray cans that are each marked with circles and four or six pointed stars, indicating navigation. First *Dream, Breathe* also plays on location, displaying a map of trails across a harmonious slate of twilight inspired colours and poetry.

To heal, their artistic choices and process is not without the environment, cosmos, or their physical being. Their style evokes shapes of blood, water, shadow, and celestial

light on pieces of wood, cans and traffic cones picked up in alleyway walks and DT strolls, mapping the diasporic city dweller. Making most of what is already here is a direct transformative response to intergenerational pain. Joan traces this process with dream recollection, pulling from their relationship to nature and marking oneself. In *They Dream of Mangos and Smoke*, greenery at the lower left ruptures in a myriad of warm and cool colours, bleeding and warping citrus fruit and waters. A petal extending to the right alludes to a tearful eye and nearby lips. Imprinted in white: “unburied traumas”.

The direction of the *fugitive wanderer* ebbs and flows between materiality and spirit. A guarded gatherer in search of being and knowing against forces both unseen and seen, Joan is equipped with dreams and spray cans to keep the beyond alive and at bay. They capture the liminality in both arriving and belonging up against the tides of erasure in vibrant and intentional displays. Their reimaginings interact and meet the line of sight as maps of blood memory, defying chronological timelines as they stake their place and others among (and in) various intersecting worlds. These resilient roots Joan forms are in between juxtapositions of “here nor there” in opposition to nowhere, displaced. All intersections, ancestor talk, and prophecies to the *yutes* are gathered, ritualized, and materialized. In limbo and on earth, the *fugitive wanderer* is: the healer, the placemaker, and are cosmically conjoined with many.

- Sundus Hussein